

**Opening Statement
By Chairman Chris Smith
House Subcommittee on Africa,
Global Human Rights and International Operations
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Following his inauguration as President in January 2001, George W. Bush issued Executive Order 13199, creating the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Soon after, a series of four more executive orders created Centers for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives at 10 Cabinet departments and three agencies. One of those agencies was the U.S. Agency for International Development.

In an April 2002 White House ceremony to promote what he called his faith-based initiative, President Bush said that the federal government should not discriminate against faith in decisions on funding for programs to provide help to people in need.

“When we have federal monies, people should be allowed to access that money without having to lose their mission or change their mission,” the President explained. “Government can write checks, but it can’t put hope in people’s hearts, or a sense of purpose in people’s lives.”

The President’s defense of the role of faith-based organizations made some people uneasy about what they believed to be the principle of separation of church and state. Fears were expressed about government money building churches and services being provided only to those who participated in religious ceremonies. This fear had been stoked by concerns over the inclusion of the charitable choice provision in the 1996 Welfare Reform Act, which allowed taxpayer-financed social service

funding of churches in some welfare programs. However, those expressing such concerns ignored the long and successful history of partnership between government and faith-based organizations – a history that did not include government sponsorship of religion or forced conversions.

From the founding of the Republic, government has worked with faith-based organizations to build and operate schools and provide other social services where government was less capable of doing so. After the Civil War, the Freedman’s Bureau, established to provide services for the millions of newly emancipated African Americans, went into partnership with faith-based organizations such as the American Missionary Association to build schools, supply food and deliver other vital services for people adapting to life after slavery.

For more than 150 years, the Young Men’s Christian Association has offered health and fitness programs, shelter, child care and other programs to people of all creeds and races. Today, the 2,617 YMCAs comprise the largest not-for-profit community service organization in America.

Catholic Charities, founded in 1910, has worked diligently to eliminate poverty, support families and empower communities across America and serve the needs of more than seven million people each year. Catholic Charities provides such services as food banks and soup kitchens, educational enrichment, counseling and mental health, temporary and permanent housing and many other community interventions.

Beginning in the 20th century, government engaged in partnerships with faith-based organizations on overseas programming to deliver famine and disaster relief, refugee aid and other assistance in development programs. One such organization is Catholic Relief Services, one of our witnesses today, which has

been providing services through government funding for more than 60 years.

Beginning in the 1950s, World Vision, a Christian relief and development organization, has concentrated on tackling the causes of poverty worldwide and provided food, education, health care and economic opportunities to people around the world. An estimated 87% of World Vision funding goes directly to programs.

Despite this record of success without mixing government and religion and without widespread discrimination in services, critics continue to express doubts about the ability of faith-based organizations to provide services due to limitations based on the very faith they profess. These doubts are expressed most often in terms of services provided for victims of HIV-AIDS.

The Government of Uganda, under the leadership of President Yoweri Museveni, has pioneered the ABC model of AIDS. ABC stands for **A**bstinence (especially for youth), **B**e Faithful for committed couples and **C**ondoms where sexually active people are unable or unwilling to practice celibacy.

In the early 1990s, an estimated 30% of adult Ugandans were HIV-positive. Through the ABC program, the rate of HIV infection declined to 12% by 1999, and is estimated to be five percent today. This past January, my staff and I visited Uganda to see firsthand how effective this program has been.

What we found was a partnership, not only between government and faith-based organizations, but also a complementary system in which the faith-based organizations concentrated on the behavior modifications elements of the AIDS control program in Uganda – the A and B – while secular organizations handled the C by distributing condoms. This program works in Uganda because organizations are allowed to do

what they do best and are not forced to betray their ideals or provide services in which they do not believe. Secular organizations that do not believe in the behavior modification elements of the ABC program would be as reluctant to engage in them as faith-based organizations would be in delivering condoms.

While the HIV-AIDS program in Uganda, managed through the President's Emergency Program for AIDS Relief had a cooperative relationship with faith-based organizations, sadly, that was not the case we found with the Global Fund in Uganda. In Uganda, as well as apparently other countries, the Global Fund somehow fails to fund faith-based organizations in proportion to the services they provide. In most African countries, faith-based organizations deliver a majority of the health care services – in some cases more than two-thirds of the health care services received – yet only 5-6% of Global Fund support is given to faith-based organizations.

USAID Administrator Randall Tobias, formerly the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, said: "Faith-based and community organizations have a reach, authority and legitimacy that make them critical partners in the fight against HIV-AIDS." Faith-based organizations also have another role to play – as an integral part of civil society in African nations.

Last year, Gregory Simpkins of my staff visited Zimbabwe during the midst of one of the cruelest campaigns against a population ever initiated by a government. In an operation whose name translates to "take out the trash," the Government of Zimbabwe destroyed tens of thousands of homes and businesses in a relentless effort to eliminate the informal sector. When nearly three-quarters of a million people found themselves homeless and without a means of earning a living, and non-governmental organizations were prevented from providing assistance, Zimbabwean churches took the lead in helping the homeless.

In country after country in Africa, churches and mosques deliver services as part of their regular activities. When they and their affiliated organizations receive government funds to help those in need, government is actually building on existing networks of service. This multiplier effect allows aid dollars to go much further. Moreover, as Administrator Tobias said, faith-based organizations possess “a reach, authority and legitimacy” that makes them natural allies in any effort to provide help to those in need at a grassroots level.

Far from being a Western intrusion in African life, working with faith-based organizations in Africa is actually a means of connecting with African heritage. African nations have a long history of integrating religion and spiritual awareness, and anyone who has spent time in Africa understands that faith is not considered outside the realm of public life there.

So long as faith-based organizations adhere to the rules concerning the separation of publicly-funded activities and religious activities and do not discriminate in the provision of their taxpayer-funded programming, the alliance of government and faith-based organizations should continue this successful tradition.

Though we have little, if any, empirical evidence quantifying the success of this public-private partnership, its very longevity attests to its success. Our hearing today is intended to examine whether the President’s faith-based initiative is indeed opening public space for religious organizations or whether this initiative contains a hidden “glass ceiling,” as one of our witnesses today describes it.

U.S. aid programs in Africa and elsewhere should be effective, but compassionate. The partnership between government and faith-based organizations and government has

historically achieved these goals. We must see that this record of achievement is continued.